

Education is the cornerstone of opportunity. We must do more as a country to support education by strengthening our schools, fully funding special education, and modernizing our classrooms. We must work to reduce class size, ensure every student can attend college, and make sure that we have the best trained, most qualified teachers in the world.

While in Congress, I have supported efforts to improve access to a college education. Because a college degree is as important today as a high school diploma was a generation ago, we must make college more affordable for families. Last term, I supported H.R. 5, the College Student Relief Act of 2007 and H.R. 2669, the College Cost Reduction and Access Act. Both bills were signed into law by the President and both will cut the interest rate in half on certain federal student loans over the next few years. The first interest rate cut went into affect on July 24, 2008. Rates will drop again in July, 2009. I also supported efforts to increase Pell Grants to students and efforts to provide up-front tuition assistance of \$4,000 each year for students who commit to teaching high-need subjects in high-need public schools.

I am also proud to have voted for H.R. 4137, the Higher Education Opportunity Act which will reform our higher education system so that it operates in the best interests of students and families, while boosting our competitiveness and strengthening our future. The Higher Education Opportunity Act, which became law on August 14, 2008, will continue Congress' effort to make college more affordable and accessible. This bill will expand college access and support for low-income and minority students by allowing students to use their Pell Grant scholarships year round, make applying for financial aid a much simpler process for all students, increase support for college readiness programs, and it would improve teacher training programs and strengthen efforts to recruit teachers into high demand fields. It will also create a new scholarship program, so those who serve our country are given every opportunity to attend college.

More recently, I am proud to have supported a significant investment in education. Congress allocated \$53.5 billion for the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund of which nearly \$40 billion will be used by States and local governments to prevent cutbacks in school staff and to modernize schools. Additionally, Congress passed the 21st Century Green High Performing Public Schools Facilities Act. This bill would invest billions of dollars in school repair and renovation projects that would create safer, healthier, and more energy-efficient learning environments for students.

I will continue to fight for the highest quality education for every student at every level. And I

will make sure every student is ready for the future job market by working to improve No Child Left Behind, reform student loans, and encouraging students at all levels to study science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to make sure the U.S. remains competitive in the 21st century and beyond.